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STATE OF ALASKA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
JUNEAU

April 23, 2008

The Honorable Lyda Green
President of the Senate
Alaska State Legislature
600 East Railroad Avenue, Suite 1
Wasilla, AK 99654

Dear Senator Green:

I am in receipt of your letter requesting the gasoline special session call be expanded to include parental notification and partial-birth abortion. As you are aware, I fully support these bills. Quite frankly, I am surprised at this request, considering the ample opportunity the Legislature had to address these issues in the recently concluded legislative session.

House Bill 301, legislation prohibiting the practice of partial-birth abortions, passed the House and was transmitted to the Senate with 18 days remaining in the regular session. The Senate companion measure, SB 264, was introduced in February, but no action had been taken at the time HB 301 arrived in the legislative chamber which you preside over. Despite the apparent opposition of the committee chair, you referred HB 301 to the same committee as SB 264 where it remained until the adjournment of the Legislature.

Likewise, House Bill 364, legislation helping protect the fundamental right of parents to raise their children and be involved in critical pregnancy decisions by their young daughters, passed the House of Representatives with sufficient time to be heard and acted upon by the full Senate; however it, too, was referred to the same committee as its Senate companion measure, SB 279. You exercised your discretionary authority as the Senate President when you referred HB 364 to a committee which had not held one hearing on that companion legislation despite the fact it was introduced on the very first day of the legislative session.

As the end of session drew near, passionate supporters of these measures made an attempt to move these bills to the floor for a vote. I was surprised to see that you and Senator Huggins voted with the opponents of these bills to block such a vote. While you may provide a technical explanation of why your internal rules do not allow

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this, I have been informed about a tool you had but chose not to use to advance these bills.

Rule 48. Discharge of Bills from Committee. (a) If the majority of the full membership of a standing, special, or joint committee desire that any legislation pending before the committee be considered, they may present the request, in writing, to the presiding officer. The presiding officer shall sign the request and this action shall be noted in the journal. The committee chair affected shall schedule the specified legislation for consideration within three days after transmittal of the request by the presiding officer to the committee chair.

As I understand this rule, Senator Huggins, if he felt passionate about doing all he could to ensure these bills became law, could have submitted a request along with his colleagues to get HB 301 and HB 364 scheduled for a fair hearing.

I believe the majority of Alaskans support these measures as well as the majority of all members in the Alaska Legislature; however, the Senate failed to act on them.

It doesn't make sense to allow your recent decisions to derail Alaska's ability to move a gas pipeline forward. I do, however, feel these issues are important enough to be handled independently, outside oil and gas deliberations.

As you are aware, Article 2, Section 9 of the Alaska Constitution allows the Legislature, by a vote of two-thirds, to call itself into a special session not to exceed 30 days. Are you considering this as an option?

Since the House of Representatives held significant debate and public testimony on these measures, a shorter session, possibly in Anchorage, could be productive to address both bills. I am interested in hearing how, as Senate President, you would ensure that Alaskans will finally see a vote take place by the entire Senate on both measures. Please provide specific details about what you would do differently than last session, including committee referrals and pulling bills from committee. I eagerly await your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Palin', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Sarah Palin
Governor